



**MY DUCATI 125 F3**

By Phil Schilling

Although the most famous racing motorcycles produced by Ducati Meccanica were the works triple-cam desmodromics of the late 1950s, the factory also built a series of motorcycles for Junior and Cadet class racing in Italy. Indeed, Ducati's first competition success came in the Italian Junior series in 1955 when the "Grand Sport," the factory's first genuine competition model, made its debut.

This original 100cc Gran Sport had a single overhead camshaft, and exposed hair-pin valve springs and rockers. The sand-cast engine (49mm x 52mm) developed about nine horsepower at 9000 rpm and drove the rear wheel through a close-ratio four-speed gearbox.

In 1957 and 1958 Ducati produced a batch of 100cc, 125 and 175cc production racers. Though most of these motorcycles carried lighting equipment (required in such events as II Gire Motociclistico d'Italia), these competition machines remained quite distinct from normal street-production motorcycles. The production racers, in fact, were completely different motorcycles: sand-cast crankcases; straight-cut gears; competition camshafts, pistons and connecting rods; special bearings; close ratio gearbox; and race-bred running gear.

The motorcycle shown here is a 125 production racer, built in the period 1957-8. No way exists to pinpoint its date of manufacture exactly (despite its serial number, F018) because the factory never kept manufacturing records on the production-racing machines. Presumably, this machine is the 18th 125 sohc production racer built. The enclosed valve-spring chest, the frame (also bearing number F018) and the brakes identify the bike as part of the 1957-58 series. The best estimate of the Ducati's total output of the 100cc/125cc production racers is about 100 complete units.

Extensively raced in Italy and elsewhere, very few of these motorcycles appear to have survived. The model shown here is the only restored example, complete with road-going equipment, known to exist in the United States.

Only a handful of these 125cc sohc Ducati production racers ever landed in the United States. One-seventy-five, 200 and 250 models were far more plentiful in America. Generally, the 125cc bikes were imported privately. This particular one-two-five arrived in the United States sometime in the mid-1960s. By then it had already been raced for years in England and Europe, and its first American owner continued to race the motorcycle until it was fairly well worn out.

Brought to California from the Midwest in 1973, the motorcycle underwent complete reconditioning and restoration at Cycle Magazine's facility in Westlake Village, California.

Factory photographs reveal detailed differences between individual 125cc production racers. This is hardly surprising since the racers were never line-production models. Rather the bikes were assembled one at a time in the factory race department. Out-of-house components, such as saddles, seem to vary from one machine to the next, probably according to supply rather than design. Tank paint schemes likewise do not follow any sequential pattern. One constant theme, however, was the blue-and-silver colors for the 125 production racing machines.

Relevant specifications include: Bore and Stroke, 55.3mm x 52mm, carburation, 25mm Dell'Orto with remote float bowl; compression ratio, 10-to 1; claimed horsepower, 14/15 at 10,000/11,000 rpm; gearbox, four speeds, close ratio; brakes, single leading shoe, 160mm front and back; wheelbase, 1275mm (50 inches); seat height, 700mm (27.5 inches); weight, wet 98kg (216 lbs); claimed top speed with fairing, 150 KMH (94 mph).

**Ducati Delight**

by Jim Finch

A Z-1 passed me  
Just the other day  
He was goin fast,  
Needless to say.

A rumpy rump,  
From the tinkin Jap Four  
A twist of the grip,  
And we were close no more.

The straightaway proved,  
To be the Kaw's delight  
He kept on going,  
Till he was out of sight.

His show biz act,  
Was a little out of place,  
The road ahead twisted,  
And I knew we had a race.

I picked a good line,  
And kept my head down low.  
We evened on the third turn.  
I yelled "need a tow?"

The sweat dripped heavily  
From a face looking scared.  
The rocketship wobbled.  
The Duke didn't care.

The speedometer reached upward  
To a hundred and four.  
The Hip was on the berm.  
He could do no more.

A cloud of dust rose,  
From my mirror I did see.  
He plodded to a stop.  
Nearly missing a tree.

A pat on the tank  
And a smile on my face.  
I knew what had happened,  
Was no my disgrace.

That there is a moral in the story,  
It is no fluke  
When riding a Cow 900  
Don't mess with a Duke.

And while I'm at it,  
It can always be said,  
I'll have a Duke between my legs,  
Cause I won't be caught dead.

